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Introductory Comments

Abstract

The 11th issue of *Colloquia Humanistica* (2022) contains a thematic block titled *The Sense of an Ending and the Imagination of the End: Apocalypse, Disaster and Messianic Time*. In the *Discussions, Book Reviews, Presentations* section, we publish two reviews of outstanding publications. Izabela Olszewska presents Tomasz Kamusella's book *Words in Space and Time: A Historical Atlas of Language Politics in Modern Central Europe* (published by Central European University Press). Ivana Hadjievska reviews a multiple-author monograph *Cultures and Politics of Remembrance: Southeast European and Balkan Perspectives*, on the politics of memory from the viewpoint of Southeast Europe and the Balkans, prepared by Naum Trajanovski, Petar Todorov, Biljana Volchevska and Ljupcho S. Risteski, and published in Skopje by forum ZFD (2021).

Keywords: *Colloquia Humanistica* 11, *The Sense of an Ending and the Imagination of the End*, Tomasz Kamusella, Naum Trajanovski, Petar Todorov, Biljana Volchevska, Ljupcho S. Risteski.

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In the 11th issue of *Colloquia Humanistica*, we propose a thematic block titled *The Sense of an Ending and the Imagination of the End: Apocalypse, Disaster and Messianic Time*, prepared by the annual's managing editor, Ewa Niedziałek. This theme harmonises with the awareness of losing our sense of security, which is a sign of our times finding confirmation in wars, natural disasters, climate threats and the pandemic, and appearing to be explained by apocalyptic visions of the end of our world and attempts at finding a response to them.

Cringuta Irina Pelea ("Mirroring Cultural Fear, Anxiety and Dystopia in American Cinematography: The Movie *A.I.* (2001)") and Stephen Ogheneruro Okpadah ("Engaging Cinema in Environmental Crisis: A Paradigm of Documentary Films of the Niger Delta") analyse contemporary threats to the world with the help of film material. Pelea writes about the dangers brought by artificial intelligence, on the basis of Steven Spielberg's stunning fiction film (*A.I. Artificial Intelligence*), while Okpadah discusses the real environmental crisis in the Niger Delta region in Nigeria based on documentaries representing "green" cinema.

In her very interesting paper ("Climate Change Litigation: Vulnerable Children and a Duty of Care"), Francine Rochford considers judicature related to climate change in the context of eschatological narratives of a possible ecological disaster. The use of the Judeo-Christian tradition and theological doctrines of despair to prove damages under the law of neglect is especially interesting.

The context of war and various responses to it, both in the distant past and in contemporary times, returns in three papers from the thematic block. Damian Kubik focuses on 19th-century literary testimony related to the fall of the Republic of Dubrovnik ("The Second Death of Dubrovnik: Selected Testimonies from the Beginning of the Nineteenth Century on the Fall of the Republic in the Light of Lujo Vojnović's Historiosophical Conception"). Analysing Ukrainian texts from epigraphic embroidery (known from tradition) that invoke the Apocalypse, Tetiana M. Brovarets discusses the difficult topic of war in Ukraine and its unique reflection noticeable in folk texts that are being transformed to correspond with the latest history ("Apocalyptic Motifs on Century-Old Ukrainian *Rushnyks* Through Today's Digital Folklore Communication").

Magda Dolińska-Rydzek analyses (extremely popular) conspiracy theories and apocalyptic discourses present in the contemporary public debate in Russia, thus essentially presenting the Russian response to the war against Ukraine ("The Antichrist and His Plot Against Russia: Conspiracy Theories

and Eschatology”). After all, belief in the Antichrist, the embodiment of all evil that heralds the end, is the best possible shield against the truth about the crimes committed by Russian soldiers in Ukraine.

Chiara Carmen Scordari’s paper on the philosophy of Joseph Soloveitchik (“Mending a Frail Humankind: Remedial Hermeneutics and Messianic Anthropology in Joseph Soloveitchik”) has a separate place in the thematic block. Soloveitchik, who came from a prominent family of Lithuanian Talmudists, graduated from a traditional Jewish Yeshiva and also from a liberal arts secondary school in Dubno; he studied political science at the Free Polish University in Warsaw and obtained his doctoral degree in philosophy in Berlin. Scordari’s paper discusses Soloveitchik’s thoughts on the role of humanity after the Shoah. The author analyses Soloveitchik’s anthropological project, focused on mending the world, in the context of existential revelation and self-knowledge as a tool of redemption. Mending the world by transforming the personified Messiah into an anthropological project will enable humanity’s renewal. Soloveitchik’s “remedial hermeneutics and messianic anthropology” thus brings hope, and our thematic block gains (thanks to Scordari) an optimistic ray of hope that is so much needed in these difficult times.

The way some of the papers in the block posit the building of environmental awareness and the transition from human-centrism to biocentrism (Okpadah) remarkably supports Soloveitchik’s reflection on the role of humanity in the world after the Shoah.

The *Discussions, Book Reviews, Presentations* section contains two reviews of outstanding monographs. Izabela Olszewska presents Tomasz Kamusella’s book *Words in Space and Time: A Historical Atlas of Language Politics in Modern Central Europe* (published by Central European University Press). The main message of this publication is the author’s confidence in the value of interdisciplinary studies on Central Europe, the *Atlas* being the result of such studies. Its unique value lies in the way it shows, through the centuries, “the phenomenon of affinity and intermixing of the various dialect groups, with no clear linguistic boundaries being identifiable within each group” (Olszewska). In Chapter 16, titled “tsentral-eyrope in 1910: Yiddish Geography”, Agata Reibach presents Yiddishland not just as a geographical place, but primarily as a space of contacts between the Jewish and non-Jewish spheres, developing over hundreds of years and fixed in the form of an original topography, in which “Warszawa – Warsaw – will always be known in Yiddish as *Varshe*” (Olszewska, 2022, p. 5). Kamusella’s atlas makes us realise that in the past, the phenomenon

of Central Europe consisted in language diversity and the cultural richness that came from it.

Ivana Hadjievska reviews a multiple-author monograph *Cultures and Politics of Remembrance: Southeast European and Balkan Perspectives*, on the politics of memory from the viewpoint of Southeast Europe and the Balkans, prepared by Naum Trajanovski, Petar Todorov, Biljana Volchevska and Ljupcho S. Risteski, and published in Skopje by forum ZFD.

Cultures and Politics of Remembrance is unique mainly because it presents varied remembrance: two different remembrances of nations conflicted as a result of war (Pavlaković, 2021, pp. 53–63), and two different remembrances within a single nation (Lyapov, 2021, pp. 81–88).

Lyapov juxtaposes the figures of three women representing very different political stances, which becomes possible from the perspective of studies on memory and memory politics in Bulgaria. Violeta Yakova was a Bulgarian Jew and active communist partisan who took part in the killings of high-ranking German and Bulgarian military officers representing the Bulgarian state collaborating with Hitler at the time, including the 1943 assassination of Bulgaria's former minister of war and leader of the profascist Union of Bulgarian National Legions, General Hristo Lukov. Mencha Karnicheva and Mara Buneva took part in assassination attempts as members of the right-wing Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation (IMRO). Karnicheva killed IMRO left-wing activist Todor Panitsa (1925), while Buneva assassinated (in 1927) Velimir Prelić, a Serb lawyer and high-ranking official of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, who was well-known for his role in the trial of students who were IMRO members. Both these women, Karnicheva and Buneva, represented the right-wing, i.e. pro-Bulgarian option within IMRO. Above all, however, Lyapov highlights the problem of how these figures are used by different groups for their own political purposes. This excellent paper raises awareness of the danger brought by the inadequate settling of accounts with remembrance in Bulgaria, and with the place of fascism in the country's history. Such an attitude fosters shallow interpretations of the past and creates a foundation for cancelling recent heroes not only because they were communists but, rather, because they were not ethnic Bulgarians, and for creating "new" ones because they enable the restoration of Bulgarians' remembrance of Macedonia – the land lost for ever.

Vjeran Pavlaković analyses the different memory that Serbs and Croats have of the war that accompanied the breakup of Yugoslavia, which leads him to posit the rejection of the narrow national perspective of victims



in favour of opening up to the Other. The event from 2020 that he describes, when Serb politician Veran Matić knelt before the monument to the victims of the Ovčara massacre, repeating the famous gesture of German Chancellor Willy Brandt at the monument to the heroes of the Warsaw Ghetto in Poland, is a milestone in building new remembrance between the Croats and the Serbs. Pavlaković's conclusion about the never-ending conciliation process makes it clear that for the conflicted parties, there is value in the process itself, as it restores the possibility of holding talks and listening to each other. And, as the author rightly points out, "many sites of memory across the former Yugoslavia await a similar shift in commemorative culture that can liberate these societies from the narrow victimisation narratives and open perspectives for a better future" (Pavlaković, 2021, p. 63).

The aim of the volume as a whole is to show a wide educational context for sites of memory that are opposing or, rather, presented as opposing. Conciliation might come with knowledge.

We give you the 11th issue of *Colloquia Humanistica*, presenting the latest (and sometimes historical) narratives of the end in the thematic block on the one hand, and focusing on the past and remembrance in the *Discussions, Book Reviews, Presentations* section on the other. Both parts of the volume complement each other and can be read one as a context for the other.

We wish you a rewarding read.

Jolanta Sujecka

Warsaw, 1 November 2022

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Uwagi wstępne

Jedenasty numer „Colloquia Humanistica” (2022) zawiera blok tematyczny zatytułowany: *The Sense of a n Ending and the Imagination of the End: Apocalypse, Disaster and Messianic Time*. W dziale *Discussions, Book Reviews, Presentations* publikujemy dwie recenzje wybitnych prac. Izabela Olszewska prezentuje (wydaną przez Central European University Press) książkę Tomasza Kamuselli, *Words in Space and Time: A Historical Atlas of Language Politics in Modern Central Europe*. Ivana Hadjievska z kolei omawia wieloautorską monografię poświęconą polityce pamięci z perspektywy Europy Południowo-Wschodniej i Bałkanów (Naum Trajanovski, Petar Todorov, Biljana Volchevska, Ljupcho S. Risteski (red.), *Cultures and Politics of Remembrance: Southeast European and Balkan Perspectives*, Skopje: forum ZFD, 2021).

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